

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TANANA 00647 082040Z

62

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-02 H-02 SY-05 PRS-01

(ISO) W

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R 081230Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7131

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0647

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, MA (REPPAS, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: W/W REPPAS' DISAPPEARANCE

REF: A. TANANARIVE 0621; B. TANANARIVE 0584

1. NEWS OF REPPAS DEPARTURE FROM EMBASSY SPREADING IN TANANARIVE DESPITE GOMR SILENCE AND POSSIBLE CENSORSHIP OF ISSUE FROM LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. TWO RESIDENT AMERICANS AND ONE EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE HAVE ASKED MEMBERS OF STAFF IF RUMOR IS TRUE. CONSULAR OFFICER RECEIVED CALL FROM REPORTER OF OFFICIAL MAD PRESS NEWS AGENCY MORNING APRIL 7 ASKING IF REPPAS STILL PHYSICALLY PRESENT AT EMBASSY. CONSULAR OFFICER RESPONDED THAT REPPAS NOT IN BUILDING, BUT CUT OFF FURTHER QUESTIONING BY SAYING HE WOULD CALL REPORTER BACK.

2. EMBASSY THEN CONTACTED DIRECTOR OF PENAL SERVICES CLAUDE RATSIMIHENA, GAVE HIM NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF REPORTER AND SUGGESTED THAT MINISTRY OF JUSTICE CONTACT REPORTER, SINCE IT WOULD BE IN BETTER POSITION TO KNOW WHAT INFORMATION GOMR WISHED TO RELEASE AT THIS TIME CONCERNING REPPAS. RATSIMIHENA AGREED IN PRINCIPLE, BUT MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ONE TO DEAL WITH PRESS.

3. AT BEGINNING OF CONVERSATION RATSIMIHENA ASKED CONSULAR OFFICER IF EMBASSY HAD ANY INFORMATION ON REPPAS' WHEREABOUTS. WHEN CONSULAR OFFICER RESPONDED NO, RATSIMIHENA POINTED OUT THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD EMBASSY HAD BEEN INFORMED

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REPPAS IN MAJUNGA. CONSULAR OFFICER SAID THAT EMBASSY HAD

NO WAY OF VERIFYING INFORMATION WHICH COULD BE SIMPLY RUMOR,
SO HAD SENT PERSON WITH INFORMATION DIRECTLY TO MINISTRY
(REFTEL A). RATSIMIHENA SAID THAT REPPAS WAS SEEN IN
MAJUNGA, BUT WAS NOW GONE, LEADING TO BELIEF THAT HE HAS
SOMEHOW LEFT COUNTRY.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT STORY OF REPPAS
ESCAPE ATTEMPT CAN BE KEPT FROM PUBLIC VERY MUCH LONGER.
ALTHOUGH TOO EARLY TO BE CERTAIN, RATSIMIHENA STATEMENT THAT
REPPAS ALREADY OUT OF COUNTRY IS GOOD POSSIBILITY. END
COMMENT.
MENDENHALL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TANANA00647
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750122-0457
From: TANANARIVE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750469/aaaacslsz.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 TANANARIVE 0621, 75 TANANARIVE 0584
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <12 DEC 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: W/W REPPAS' DISAPPEARANCE
TAGS: CASC, MA, (REPPAS, GEORGE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006